A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

PRESENT ATTEMPT

FOR THE FURTHER PROMULGATION OF THE

GOSPEL,

IN THE

EASTERN PARTS

OF THE

COUNTY OF *KENT.*

WITH SOME

OBSERVATIONS RELATIVE THERETO.

Who hath despised the day of small things?—ZACH. iv. 10.

CANTERBURY:

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A

SHORT ACCOUNT, &c.

IN the year 1788, a member of the General Baptiſt Church at Canterbury, experienced himſelf impreſſed with ardent deſires to get the goſpel of the bleſſed Jeſus preached at the place of his nativity, a village called Sturry, about two miles from Canterbury; and conſidering that one of the worthy paſtors of the ſociety before mentioned, was almoſt incapacitated for preaching, by reaſon of ſickneſs and age, and that the other was fully employed, he turned his thoughts towards Mr. Weſley's Miniſters, and inclined him to apply to the Aſſiſtant Preacher at Canterbury, and to propoſe the licencing and fitting up of a building, provided he and his fellow Miniſters would preach there; to which he acceded. The building was accordingly licenſed July 15, 1788; but, from the ſeveral circumſtances that took place, it appears it was not the will of the Lord that the work ſhould be carried on by the Miniſters before mentioned; for the occupier of the building was not able to find a market for the goods it contained, though the time was come when he expected it, and when there was annually a great demand for ſuch commodities; this prevented any thing being done at that juncture; and when, towards the latter end of October a market offered, and the place was about to be cleared and fitted up, that imprudent ſpeech Mr. Weſley made

at Sevenoaks, againſt the Baptiſts, which occaſioned their friend to write a Vindication of them, cauſed a jealouſy in the Methodiſts that fruſtrated the deſign.

Things continued in this ſituation for ſome months, when about the beginning of September, 1789, the perſon determined to commit the caſe to the Lord, which he did for ſome weeks, by fervent application to the throne of grace, agreeable to that paſſage which ſays, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harveſt, that he will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt." Matt. ix. 38. And on the evening of the 20th day of October, after prayer, he propoſed to ſpend the firſt part of the next day in faſting and prayer, for the deſired bleſſing; but in the morning, finding himſelf poorly, he declined the former, but perſevered in the latter. In the after part of the day, he wrote the greateſt part of a letter to a friend to enquire after a Miniſter that he had heard was likely to be at liberty, but before he had concluded it, a perſon from Ramſgate gave him the following information:—

That the Boſton packet, which had on board a Miniſter of the goſpel, going to America, had proceeded on her voyage as far as the Neſs, but was driven back to the Downs by a ſtorm, and from thence got into Ramſgate Harbour to repair the damage ſuſtained.

That the Miniſter, being poorly in health, had taken lodgings at Ramſgate, deſiring the Captain to let him know when the veſſel would be ready to ſail; but, the Captain being an American, and not expecting to come to this country again, took an opportunity of ſailing away without him, taking all his goods, books and apparel, excepting what he had on his back, and a ſhirt, ſtock and pair of ſtockings, then at the waſher-woman's, though he had informed the Miniſter the day before, that he could not ſail on the morrow. In conſequence of this procedure, the Miniſter was then gone to Dover or Folkſtone, to enquire if the ſhip might not be off the Neſs;

Neſs; and if he did not find it there, was to return to Ramſgate as next day, in order to go by a veſſel to London.

Upon this, the perſon before mentioned deſiſted from finiſhing his letter, and thinking the Lord had anſwered his prayer, he determined to ſet off the next morning for Ramſgate, which he accordingly did; but calling at Mr. Kingsford's at Sturry, and finding Mr. Philpot, from Dover, there, he juſt informed him of the intent of his journey, and departed for Ramſgate; but hearing the Miniſter was not come back from Dover, he thought it adviſeable to return to Canterbury that evening, and to go to Dover the next day, deſiring his Ramſgate friends to ſend the Miniſter to his houſe, ſhould he miſs him. But the Miniſter returned that day from Folkſtone to Dover, in company with the Rev. Mr. Atwood, who obſerving a drunken abuſive fellow in the ſtreet, a little beyond Mr. Philpot's houſe, was thereby induced to go in to avoid the man, when Mr. Atwood happening to mention the name of his companion, Mr. Philpot informed him of what he had heard that morning at Sturry, and perſuaded the Miniſter to go by the coach that evening to Canterbury, which he did, and arrived at the friend's houſe who had been to Ramſgate to ſeek him, about an hour after his return from that place, to the no ſmall joy and comfort of the perſon.

Several more circumſtances of a like nature, tended with theſe to incline them to think, that the "Lord had his way in the whirlwind, and in the ſtorm." Nah. i. 3. And that it was his pleaſure to prevent this Miniſter from going to America, and to ſend him to Canterbury to begin a work in that country, which we hope will prove a bleſſing to many precious ſouls, and continue as long as the ſun and the moon endureth.

Upon his arrival, his friend informed him of his intentions, invited him to ſtop with him and preach the goſpel; and the Miniſter on conſidering that there ap-

peared to be ſomething more than chance in the various complex circumſtances that brought him there, conſented to ſtop for one month, or longer, if it ſhould ſtill appear to be the will of the Lord.

Upon which his friend exerted himſelf to prepare the building at Sturry, before mentioned, and a deſk being made and ſeats provided, the Miniſter preached a lecture there on Friday evening, October 30, 1789, and the place was nearly filled with people.

On Lord's day evening, he preached again to a crowded and attentive audience; and as ſoon as convenient a pulpit was provided, and the place fitted up ſuitable to its ſituation.

Soon after, a lecture was eſtabliſhed on Tueſday evening at the Baptiſt Meeting at Canterbury, to be preached ~~in~~ by the ſame Miniſter; and by his often preaching there on a Lord's day, one of their Paſtors was at liberty to aſſiſt in preaching at Sturry, which making a change, rendered it more agreeable and uſeful.

April 16, 1790, his friend hired and licenſed a large room at Boughton, and on the 21ſt he commenced preaching lectures there.

About the ſame time Mr. Thomas Chriſtopher, a lively young Miniſter at Broadſtairs in the Iſle of Thanet, was induced to forſake his Calviniſtic ſentiments and join in this connection, upon which his friend bought a piece of ground, and built a meeting-houſe there, which was opened on the 20th of June, 1790, by the Rev. Mr. Dan Taylor.

Oct. 1, 1790, a young Miniſter who lately belonged to a Society of Calviniſts at London, was engaged to aſſiſt brother Dexter, during the winter ſeaſon, when the Meeting at Stelling, built by their friend, was almoſt wholly ſupplied by them.

Sept. 19, 1791, Mr. Porter, one of the laſt Miniſters which the late Mr. Weſley ſent out to preach, being convinced that it was obligatory upon him to be baptized,

tized, offered to join this connection and labour as an itinerant Preacher, and was ſhortly after accepted.

PERSECUTIONS.

THESE were to be expected, agreeable to the predictions of the bleſſed Jeſus. Many of the poor people were menaced by thoſe who called themſelves their betters; and ſome of their threats were actually executed, and they ſuffered ſome trifling loſſes for the goſpel's ſake. One of our moſt zealous friends was ſtopped and inſulted ſeveral times; and various attempts were made to create confuſion when we were met for divine worſhip; but nothing gave ſo much offence as the profeſſion of the Ordinance of Believer's Baptiſm; upon this they chiefly exerciſed their wit and raillery—they mocked, by talking of dipping of animals—rhymes and ſongs were made upon it; and they endeavoured by various means to repreſent it in the moſt ridiculous light; nay, they appeared to be exceeding mad againſt it; and on this account ſeveral of our friends ſuffered much, for the iron hand of violence was not withheld by ſome of their perſecutors.

Thoughts on the cauſes of theſe circumſtances gave riſe to the following obſervations,

As "that which is highly eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God." Luke xvi. 15. Even ſo that which is highly eſteemed by God, is had in abomination in the ſight of men; for no ordinance was ever ſo highly honored and eſteemed by God as Baptiſm, as may be proved by obſerving, that the Son of God honored it by being "baptized of John in the river Jordan." Mark i. 9. And as ſoon as he was come up "out of the water, lo, the heavens were opened." And it was honored by the bleſſed ſpirit of God, which

deſcending

deſcending like a dove, reſted upon him. And then the Father honored it by a voice from Heaven, ſaying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed." Matt. iii. 16, 17. So that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit moſt gloriouſly honored this ordinance of water baptiſm; while on the contrary, the ſcornful indignation with which ſome profeſſors, the deriſion and mockery, the malice and enmity with which the world ſpeaks of it, and thoſe that have honored it by following the example and obeying the command of the lovely Jeſus. And the revilings and perſecutions they meet with, ſufficiently prove, that no divine ordinance was ever ſo highly diſhonored, nor ſo lightly eſteemed by men.

The ſpirituality of the ordinance of Baptiſm will appear from the following particulars: Firſt, It was the bleſſed God who ſent John to baptiſe. John i. 33.

Secondly, The Holy Spirit of God, and alſo the Father and Son, condeſcended to celebrate this ordinance in that moſt extraordinary and glorious manner before related, which we cannot believe they would have done, if it had been only a carnal ordinance.

Thirdly, This baptiſm was commanded and continued in the grand commiſſion given by the bleſſed Jeſus to his diſciples, when he promiſed to be with them, even unto the end of the world. "Go," ſays he, "teach, or preach, and baptize." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 16. And they accordingly did ſo, as we may read in the Acts. And every one of his true Miniſters come out with his full commiſſion to *teach* and *baptize*; and they may be ſaid to be only partly teachers, or to be commiſſioned by men, who pretend to come out with a part of this commiſſion, viz. To *teach* and not to *baptize*. And alſo to teach men to obſerve *more* things than Jeſus hath commanded. They come out only to act the part or parts, which are moſt pleaſing to the man or men who commiſſioned them.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, on the day of Penticoſt, when the Apoſtles were filled with the holy ſpirit in a moſt extraordinary manner, one of them ſtood up and exhorted his hearers to "be baptized." Acts ii. 38. And it appears that the ſame bleſſed ſpirit ſent Philip to teach and baptize the Eunuch. Acts viii. 29. And afterwards Peter to Cornelius. And when the Holy Ghoſt fell on them that heard the word, Peter commanded them to be baptized. Acts x. 19, 44, 47, 48. From this laſt inſtance in particular it may be ſeen that the Holy Ghoſt again honored this divine ordinance of the Father and Son, and appears to ſtand forth as the divine witneſs to the ſpirituality and neceſſity of the ordinance, becauſe it was poured out upon Cornelius and his friends but juſt before Peter commanded them to be baptized.

Fifthly, The Scripture at ſeveral places ſpeaks of its ſpiritual ſignificancy. The Apoſtle ſays, we are "Baptized into his death;" that is, into a belief that Jeſus Chriſt died for us, and as he publicly took up his croſs, ſuffered ſhame, and died for us—ſo we publicly take up our croſs, ſuffer ſhame, and die unto ſin for him; therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm unto death, &c. Rom. vi. 2. 4. It ſignifies our being buried with Chriſt, and riſing to newneſs of life. Col. ii. 12. "Our being baptized into Chriſt, and putting on Chriſt." Gal. iii. 27. "It is called the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God." 1 Peter, iii. 21. In ſhort, the waſhing with water repreſents the cleanſing of the ſoul from ſin by the blood of Chriſt. Luke vii. 29. Acts. xxii. 16. 1 Peter, iii. 21.

Now as theſe particulars fully prove that Baptiſm is a divine and ſpiritual ordinance—ſo the enmity, &c. mentioned before, which *ſome* profeſſors, and the generality of the world manifeſt againſt it, fully proves that their minds are carnal, agreeable to the declarations of the inſpired Apoſtle, who ſays, "the carnal mind is enmity againſt God." Rom. viii. 7. "The natural man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14.

And from these observations we may learn the reason why so many shew such enmity against Believers Baptism; it is because that is spiritual, and they are carnal; they look only to the outward means used in this divine ordinance. They never did know, and by reason of their prejudices they cannot discern the inward spirituality of it; therefore it is foolishness to them, and they exercise all their spight and enmity against it.

At Boughton a person was heard to say, he should come to our place of worship and kick up a dust, and he was as good as his word, for, February 6, 1791, he came, with several of his companions, and by their riotous behaviour, obliged the Minister to leave preaching, and the audience to depart.

To prevent such proceedings in future, we were advised by many to procure a warrant and apprehend the principal disturber, which was done, and he being convicted, and liable to the penalty of the law, he desired the matter might be mitigated, which was consented to, on his agreeing to pay the constable's expences (which were about fifty shillings) and asking pardon in the public newspapers, which he did.

At Broadstairs, some malicious person or persons, threw some brickbats through the windows, which, together with the various persecutions we endured, and the stories, slanders, lies, and calumnies, that were propagated, occasioned the letter from which the following extracts are taken.

"I am not sorry to hear some evil disposed persons have broke the windows of the meeting-house at Broadstairs; I think we should not be in a hurry to repair them while the weather continues warm, as the sight may make useful impressions on the minds of some of the inhabitants. It may be productive of good, and I trust

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it will, for we know the Lord has often permitted the wicked to exerciſe their wrath to a certain degree, and then has reſtrained it, and drawn good out of what has paſt, to the greateſt benefit of his church and people. Indeed we have very great reaſon to fly unto the Lord as a refuge, and to put our truſt in him, for I perceive that the world ſtorms, threatens, and breaks our windows; that ſome of the eſtabliſhment, who profeſs to have come out of the world, repreſent ours as a doctrine of ignorance, ſtubbornneſs, inſolence, arrogance, highwaymen, murderous, damnable, blaſphemy, deſtructive, hardening, a help to popery, and deviliſh. That the Roman Catholicks ſay we are out of the pale of their church, and therefore cannot be ſaved. That ſome of the Preſbyterians repreſent us and our doctrine as ſpringing from ſuch as they ſay are wicked men. Some of the Independents ſay we are heretical, and therefore they cannot wiſh us God ſpeed. Some of the Calviniſt judge and condemn us, and ſay we muſt be damned, &c. Mr. Weſley ſays we had better cut a perſon's throat than trouble him about Baptiſm, for it is ſending him to hell and perdition. From all which it appears that we are in a ſimilar ſituation with thoſe primitive Baptiſts, Peter and his brethren. The world and the profeſſors of godlineſs at that time, viz. the High Prieſt and Prieſts, Saducees and Lawyers, Scribes and Pha iſees, perſecuted and treated them with the utmoſt contempt; even ſo the world and *ſome* of its preſent profeſſors of godlineſs, now do us. "They called their way of worſhip hereſy." Acts. xxiv. 14. So do theſe ours. "They were ſaid to be a ſect every where ſpoken againſt." Acts. xxviii. 22. So are we. "They were defamed, and accounted as the offſcouring of all things." 1 Cor. iv. 13. So are we now, as the ſeveral facts related, and others ſufficiently prove.

From the ſcriptures it appears that the allwiſe God was the firſt founder of the Baptiſts, "for he ſent

his ſervant John to baptize." John i. 33. But King Herod cut off his head. Mark vi. 27. Herod's immediate ſucceſſors in perſecution were the Prieſt of the eſtabliſhed church of Judea, "who rejected the counſel of God againſt themſeves, not being baptized." Luke vii, 30. It appears that they were contented with being circumciſed in their infancy, they did not like to be troubled about baptiſm, and perſecuted thoſe that did. Crucifying even the bleſſed Jeſus, who was baptized by John in the river Jordan, when he was about 30 years old. Matt. iii. 16. And when the diſciples in compliance with his command (and their commiſſion) Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 16. had baptized 3000 believers, and received them into the church, they impriſoned Peter and John. Acts. ii. 41. iv. 3. And after the diſciples had ſpread this doctrine throughout Judea, and Philip had baptized a number of men and women at Samaria, and the Eunuch, on the road to Gaza, Acts. viii. Then the High Prieſt granted letters to Saul, to empower him to bring all that he ſhall find of this way, whether they were men or women, bound to Jeruſalem, (no mention made of children, becauſe there was none baptized) Acts ix. 2. But here the Lord interfered, and Saul, the perſecutor of the Baptiſts, was converted, and became a Baptiſt, 18th verſe, and then he was perſecuted in his turn, by his infant circumciſing brethren, ſee 23d verſe.—And the ſucceſſors of theſe advocates for infant church-membership have continued at various times and degrees, to perſecute our predeceſſors, and ourſelves down to the preſent time. As the numbers who have been impriſoned, hanged, and tied back to back, and drowned in Holland—thoſe who have been impriſoned and murdered in France, and other countries—thoſe who have been fined, impriſoned and burnt in England, in the reign of Edward VI. Queen Elizabeth, the James's and Charles's—and the action, reproaches, and ſlanders

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mentioned in the first part of my letter sufficiently testify. And if we may form a judgment of their dispositions from their present conduct just referred to, it appears that we should meet with very little better treatment from them, than our predecessors did from theirs, if God had not given us a milder sovereign. But blessed be our God, we still exist as a church of Christ and his glorious truths and ordinances are still maintained among us; and tho' we are only a little flock, as the true church always was, Luke xii. 32. yet we may be certain "that the gates of hell shall never prevail against us." Mat. xvi. 18. But we shall in God's own time, come up out of the wilderness, leaning on the Beloved.

And let these and other glorious promises in the gospel, encourage us to persevere, and add to our faith virtue, courage, or magnanimity, that we may bear up under all these trials with truly christian fortitude—enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ—remembering that he hath said The servant is not greater than his Lord; "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you—if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also—if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you—if ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 20. 18. 19. "If we suffer we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 12. —if we are faithful unto death, he will give us a crown of life." Rev. ii. 10. And like Paul, may we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and cheerfully suffer the loss of all things, if called to it, and count them dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, or any thing like infant circumcision, to trust to, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is

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of God by faith. Phil. iii. 8, 9. "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteouſneſs." Matt. iii. 15. "That ſo we may know him and the power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Phil. iii. 10. And then we ſhall ariſe in his glorious likeneſs."

SUCCESS.

BY Divine grace, ſeveral poor ſouls have been brought from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan to the living God: and by the bleſſing of the Lord on theſe exertions, about thirty perſons have been induced to join the General Baptiſt Churches in this part of the county; and we have reaſon to believe that a good work is begun in ſeveral more, which we truſt will be carried on to the day of the Lord Jeſus.

STATE OF THE CASE, Oct. 21, 1791.

A New Meeting-Houſe at Stelling—preaching on a Lord's day—increaſing in hearers.

A building fitted in a convenient manner, at Sturry—preaching on Lord's day and Thurſday evenings—the number of hearers decreaſing—a conference on Monday evening.

A large room at Boughton—preaching on Lord's day and Tueſday evenings—hearers continue much the ſame.

A new Meeting-Houſe at Broadſtairs—preaching on the Lord's day, well attended.

Preaching at Faverſham on Monday evening, apparently with but little probability of ſucceſs.

As a convenient room, for preaching, could not be obtained, at Hearn, a ſmall meeting-houſe is contracted for, to be finiſhed ſoon.

MINI-

MINISTERS.

MATTHEW Dexter--Thomas Chriſtopher--James Porter—occaſionally aſſiſted by ſeveral Miniſters, and young men who are zealous in promoting the work.

The intent of publiſhing this brief account, is to preſent it to ſuch as the Lord has bleſſed with plenty, and generous hearts to uſe the ſame to his glory, and the good of poor ignorant ſinners; that being acquainted with the caſe, they may enjoy the pleaſure of contributing their mite, and of being inſtrumental in the hand of the Lord, in reſcuing ſome of the thouſands of periſhing ſouls from the worſt of evils here, and eternal miſery hereafter; every one of which, in the eſtimation of the FRIEND OF SINNERS, is of more value than the *whole world*; "For what ſhall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul." Mark viii. 36.

As the ſubſcriptions increaſe more Miniſters will be employed, and the work extended—the receipts and diſburſements—the ſtate of the caſe, &c. will be publiſhed at the end of every year, and ſent to the ſubſcribers. Subſcriptions forwarded to STEPHEN LOWDELL, Eſq. No. 34, Southwark-park, London; or to WILLIAM KINGSFORD, Canterbury, will be gratefully received.